Self-Talk and Depression

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Replacing the Negative With the Positive

Depression influences your mood, motivation and self-esteem in unwanted ways. The primary victim in this area is your self-talk. Self-talk is what you say to yourself throughout the day. Many people think that a situation or event makes them feel or act the way they do. What is happening is the events are interpreted by your beliefs and self-talk. These interpretations then guide your response and reaction to the situation.

The good news is you have power over your self-talk, and power over self-talk means power over depression. Here is some information about what self-talk is and what it can do.

Self-Talk is:

- **Quiet and automatic.** As mentioned, self-talk occurs constantly and often without you realizing its effects.
- **Telegraphic.** It will not always be full sentences or even words. Sometimes self-talk will be images or pictures that contain information and associations.
- **Irrational.** Self-talk usually seems honest and rational, but it is not. Self-talk driven by depression is anything but truthful.
- **A bad habit.** Chances are excellent that your self-talk was once really good. Over time, you have gotten used to putting yourself down or hearing others put you down. Negative self-talk is learned.

Self-Talk can:

- **Encourage continued avoidance.** Self-talk will convince you to stay away from situations that feel difficult or uncomfortable, leaving no room for improvement.
- **Increase depression and anxiety.**
- **Trigger panic.**

Changing your Self-Talk

Though self-talk may be a new concept, it is easily changed. Remember to be patient with yourself if this is a new skill.

- **Pay attention.** Learn to slow down and monitor your internal monologue. It may flash by at first, but continued practice will extend the time that the thought appears.
- **Unravel your thoughts.** After you slow down your thoughts, it may seem like a jumbled mess of different beliefs. Write them down to understand where the connections are made and what contributes to your beliefs. Did negative comments made to you change the way you see yourself? Once the thoughts are unraveled, they will be easier to process.
- **Challenge your thoughts.** Just because you think or feel it does not make it true. With depression, many

of your thoughts are going to be distorted. Depression wants you to be more depressed. Once you've slowed and unraveled your thoughts, look for the ones causing harm. You may have thoughts that you are a failure or worthless. You may think that situations are too challenging to take on. Investigate these thoughts. Are they rational? If not, dispute the thought and find new ways of thinking. Why believe a lie that makes you feel bad?

- **Replace your thoughts.** The challenge of overcoming unwanted thoughts must be combined with the addition of positive thoughts. Reducing the negative is good, but real improvement is made when you add desirable, healthy thoughts. Find some that work for you. "I am a good person. People respect my opinions. I have good ideas." These are only a few but an appropriate way to change your self-talk.

Conclusion

You have everything you need, right now, to change the way you feel and the things you say to yourself. Understanding self-talk and depression is a great start. It will take some time to change the momentum from negative to positive, but challenging and replacing the bad with the good will move you to a better place.